

DAVID Y. IGE
Governor

JOSH GREEN
Lt. Governor



PHYLLIS SHIMABUKURO-GEISER
Chairperson, Board of Agriculture

MORRIS M. ATTA
Deputy to the Chairperson

State of Hawaii
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
1428 South King Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96814-2512
Phone: (808) 973-9600 FAX: (808) 973-9613

October 29, 2020

TO: Members of the Hawai`i Coffee Industry

FROM: Phyllis Shimabukuro-Geiser *Phyllis Shimabukuro-Geiser*
Chairperson, Board of Agriculture

SUBJECT: Coffee Leaf Rust Tentatively Identified on Hawai`i Island

A sample of a rust fungus collected at a residence in Hilo, Hawai`i Island, has been tentatively identified by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Agricultural Research Service in Hilo as coffee leaf rust (CLR). Samples will be sent to the USDA National Identification Services to confirm the identity of the causal agent. If confirmed, this will be the first detection on that island. Coffee leaf rust is one of the most devastating pests of coffee plants. Coffee leaf rust is established in all of the other major coffee growing areas of the world but has not previously been found in Hawai`i, prior to its discovery last week on Maui.

It is unknown at this time how the rust got to coffee plants on Hawai`i Island. The Hawai`i Department of Agriculture (HDOA) is partnering with multiple agencies to determine the extent of this infestation and how coffee leaf rust may have been introduced to Hawai`i Island.

Coffee leaf rust can cause severe defoliation. Infected leaves drop prematurely, greatly reducing the plant's photosynthetic capacity and reducing berry growth. Long term effects of rust can have a stronger impact by causing dieback, which reduces the number of productive nodes on branches. This can have a significant impact on the following year's yield with some researchers estimating losses between 30% and 80%.

HDOA is asking that individuals on Hawai`i Island not transport coffee plants, coffee green waste, coffee cherries/pulp, used coffee processing/harvesting equipment, used coffee bags or green coffee beans interisland, and if possible, within the island until more is known of the extent of the infestation and actual identification of the fungus.

To report possible CLR infestations on any island, call HDOA's Plant Pest Control Branch at (808) 973-9525.



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For more information on coffee leaf rust go to the University of Hawaii – College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources (UH-CTAHR) webpages at:
<https://www.hawaiicoffeeed.com/coffee-leaf-rust---nko.html>
http://www.extento.hawaii.edu/kbase/crop/Type/h_vasta.htm